COVID-19 Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions

Disclaimer: Due to the quickly evolving nature of the COVID-19 vaccination initiative, information may change or be updated frequently. Continue to view the most up to date information at the CDC *(cdc.gov).*

1)   Will the COVID-19 vaccine be free?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine will be free to everyone. You may see a charge from the vaccine clinic to your health insurance provider for the cost of the vaccine, but it can't be passed on to you in any way. Both private insurance and public programs will cover 100% of the vaccine administration fee. Individuals who are uninsured will receive the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost.

2)   What is the vaccine?

There are two vaccines approved for Emergency Use Authorization - Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech. Both of these are mRNA vaccines which are a new, but not unknown, type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a spike protein (found on the surface of the COVID-19 virus) that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies. mRNA vaccines do not use a weakened or inactive form of the virus.

Video explaining the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=the81FQoAUI

3)   What are the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines?

The two COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States do not contain eggs, preservatives, or latex. For a full list of ingredients, please see each vaccine's Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers:

- Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (see page 2)
- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine (see page 2)

4)   What is the difference between the 2 vaccines?

See this fact sheet for a comparison of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines: https://www.astho.org/COVID-19/Pfizer-Moderna-Vaccine-Comparison/

5)   How do I know the COVID-19 vaccine is safe?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted Emergency Use Authorizations (EUA) for two COVID-19 vaccines which have been shown to be safe and effective as determined by data from the manufacturers and findings from large clinical trials. These data demonstrate that the known and potential benefits of this vaccine outweigh the known and potential harms of becoming infected with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19). Watch a video describing the emergency use authorization. Learn more about how federal partners are ensuring the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in the United States.

6) The side effects for the COVID-19 vaccine are identical to the virus itself. If people are vaccinated and develop side effects, would they have to be tested for COVID-19?

Vaccine recipients will be provided with guidance on how to interpret side effects and what actions they should take following vaccination. Here is a chart to distinguish side effects from the vaccine vs side effects that would not be attributed to the vaccine:

Potential Vaccine Side Effects	NOT Side Effects from the Vaccine
Fever	Cough
Tiredness	Shortness of breath
Headache	Sore throat
Chills	Loss of smell or taste
Muscle or Joint Pain	
Pain/redness/swelling at injection site	
Nausea/vomiting	

Typically, vaccine side effects appear within 3 days of vaccination and resolve within 1-2 days of onset. Symptoms lasting longer than 2 days might require COVID-19 testing. Possible exposures in the last 14 days also needs to be taken into account when determining if testing is necessary.

7) If I develop side effects after the vaccine can I still go to work?

See question and answer above. If you do not have any exposure in the last 14 days and symptoms are in "Potential Vaccine Side Effects" column above, then you may continue your normal activities. Check with HR at work and follow their guidelines. If symptoms persist longer than 2 days, then consider staying home until resolved.

8) Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No! The 2 vaccines that are currently offered are mRNA vaccines which means they do NOT contain the virus in them. Because it takes a few weeks to develop immunity after a vaccination it is possible to get infected with COVID-19 right before or right after a vaccination and test positive. The vaccines approved for use require 2 doses, so you do not have the maximum protection the vaccine offers until after both doses. The vaccine will NOT cause a positive COVID-19 test result.

9) How long will a COVID-19 vaccination offer protection?

We will not know the length of protection that the vaccines offer against COVID-19 until we have more data. Periodic boosters, such as with the annual flu shot, may or may not be needed.

 It is estimated that people have about 50% immunity after the 1st dose of vaccine and about 95% immunity after both doses of the vaccine. Remember however, that it takes your body 2-3 weeks after receiving a vaccine to build up the immunity; immunity is not immediate.

The protection someone gains from having an infection (called "natural immunity") varies depending on the disease, and it varies from person to person. Because this virus is new, we don't know how long natural immunity might last. Current evidence suggests that getting the virus again (reinfection) is uncommon in the 90 days after the first infection with the virus that causes COVID-19.

10) I already had COVID-19. Do I need to get the vaccine?

Yes. It is unknown how long natural immunity from the virus lasts, so it is still important for individuals who were previously infected to get vaccinated.

11) Should I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or nursing?

People who are pregnant and part of a group recommended to receive the COVID-19 vaccine may choose to be vaccinated. If you have questions about getting vaccinated, talking with a healthcare provider may might help you make an informed decision. No data are available yet on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in lactating women or on the effects of mRNA vaccines on breastfed infants or on milk production/excretion. mRNA vaccines are not thought to be a risk to breastfeeding infants. There are no noted safety concerns in people who became pregnant after receiving the vaccine. Studies about vaccine safety in pregnant women are planned.

12) Will persons who get the vaccine still have to wear face masks?

Yes. Everyone will need to continue taking precautions like masking and physical distancing as there is not enough information currently available for the CDC to change the recommendation at this time.

Although the vaccine is very good at keeping the vaccinated person from getting sick, we don't know yet whether vaccinated people can still spread the virus. Therefore, a person might not get COVID-19 after getting vaccinated, but might still be able to spread the virus to others.

13) Do I still have to quarantine if I have received the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. At this time, the vaccine is still so new and there is not enough data to change quarantine guidelines after receiving the vaccine. This will likely change as more people are vaccinated and we have more data.

14) What are the long term side effects of the vaccine?

This is still a new vaccine and long term information is unknown at this time.

Sources and Additional FAQs:

- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html
- https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine-faq.htm